



May 31, 2005

The Honorable William Thomas  
2208 RHOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Thomas:

I am writing on behalf of the California Strawberry Commission in support of the CAFTA-DR agreement.

The California Strawberry Commission is a state government agency that represents an industry of approximately 510 growers and 75 shippers and processors. In 2005 strawberries will be grown on over 32,000 acres with a farmgate value in excess of 1.3 billion dollars.

- Removing trade barriers between the United States and Central America and the Dominican Republic will create important new export opportunities for U.S. farmers, ranchers and processors.

- Sugar is a major high cost ingredient to strawberry processors.

- The U.S. market is already very open to Central American and DR exports. Over 99% of regional agricultural exports (on a trade-weighted basis) enter the United States duty free already under MFN tariffs and CBI preferences. The United States imported over \$2 billion from the region in 2002. The vast majority of these imports are crops not competitive with domestically-grown commodities, such as coffee and tropical fruits.

- Important US sectors will benefit. Nearly every major U.S. agricultural sector will benefit from expanded market access under CAFTA-DR, with gains in such sectors as feed grains, wheat, rice, soybeans, poultry, pork, beef, dairy, fruits, vegetables, and processed products.

The CSC industry urges Congress to pass the CAFTA-DR agreement and provide additional export market opportunities for all of American agriculture.

Sincerely,

Rodger Wasson  
President